

people and make a positive difference every day that we can.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF BILL HUGHES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Speaker, I also wish my friend from New Mexico well in the next phase of his life. I thank him for his service to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make a bittersweet announcement, and that is to say thank you to a member of my staff who has given 31 years of his life to this great institution. I am talking about Bill Hughes.

Bill Hughes has decided to retire at the end of the 116th Congress. More than one person has remarked over the years that Bill Hughes comes with the building. Bill has been my policy director since I became the Republican whip in 2014. He was my very first hire in that office. But his career was already legendary when I asked him to unretire and to join the whip team.

Bill's career embodies the American Dream. He grew up in South Dakota. He didn't have connections in Washington. He just had a dream. He was drawn to public service, and his breaks came through hard work. He became an expert on the Federal budget and the legislative process.

For 31 years, Bill has been part of some of the biggest policy debates, legislative achievements, and history-making events of our time. He retires still doing what he dreamed about doing as a young kid growing up in rural South Dakota.

Bill has served as policy director for a Speaker of this House. He served as staff director for a committee, as Chief of Staff for a Senator, and a staff director for the Senate Republican Policy Committee.

He began his career at OMB under David Stockman back in the Reagan administration.

When I hired Bill, I hired the institutional memory of this place dating all the way back to the 98th Congress. He has an encyclopedic memory of budget accounts, past appropriations battles, Senate procedures, and, yes, also the history of American music. You can imagine some of those conversations that we have had through some of the battles we have had up here.

His colleagues respect and admire him; and more than one generation of staffers have sought his advice, guidance, and mentorship.

We have all been involved in dropping a bill right over there on the House floor, but very few of us have dropped a bill the way that Bill Hughes has.

One day, when he was working for the legendary Bud Shuster, Bill came running down to the floor with a 1,700-page infrastructure bill to get it introduced so it could get voted on, and he literally dropped the bill on the floor.

It took some time to put it back together and, of course, with Bill's attention to detail, he made sure that every page was back in the right place. But he never once "dropped" a bill for me.

Bill is a consummate staffer and a humble public servant. He works endless hours to ensure that I have the best information and the most important facts about key legislation. He never made himself part of the story. He is that kind of person who deflects attention and credit.

In doing so, Bill Hughes has earned the confidence, not only of me, but of all the leaders that he has worked with. Speaker Boehner, Speaker Ryan, Leader MCCARTHY all have sought Bill's advice and counsel during his tenure as my policy director in the whip office.

I am sad to have to say good-bye to Bill. We will miss the House Republicans' "Senate whisperer," as we refer to him. But very few have earned the thanks and best wishes that Bill leaves this institution with.

Bill stands out among his peers and colleagues. He came to Washington nearly 40 years ago with a servant's heart. He came here for a career in public service, and he leaves the House with more than 33 years of legislative and executive branch experience. It is truly a remarkable run.

Bill is retiring to spend more time with his wife and kids and the greener pastures of his cabin in the mountains. If Bill wanted to continue to work, it would be right here in the House that he loves, and the House that will be forever indebted to his sacrifice, his wisdom, and his great love for the United States of America.

Bill, we were lucky to work with you, and America is a richer Nation thanks to your service. You will be deeply missed here, but you have more than earned the opportunity to enjoy this next chapter in your already rich life.

Thank you to Bill Hughes, and God bless you.

FAREWELL TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise with honor to address this Chamber one last time. And I say "with honor," because it has been truly that to serve the people of South Carolina's First Congressional District. I want to thank them for that opportunity, particularly because, by most accounts, I never should have been here in the first place.

I was reminded of that over the Thanksgiving holiday as I walked on the beach on Sullivan's Island with my 2-year-old son, Boone. We were out there searching for a sandcastle that he had built the day before, but I knew it had been washed away by the tides.

I thought about the slim chances I had of making it here back in 2018. And

then my defeat 2 years later. It became apparent that political victories and losses are as transient and vulnerable as my son's sandcastle on the beach. Especially in a district like ours, a Democrat in a ruby red and gerrymandered district that President Trump carried by 13 points back in 2016, one that had not been served by a Democrat in my lifetime.

But we made it here by promising something different, by promising to work with one another, reach across the aisle, listen to those we may not agree with, and get things done.

Washington, D.C., was rife with partisanship and chaos. However, I didn't arrive 2 years ago to simply complain; I came to roll up my sleeves and be part of the solution. Or, as the old adage goes, I did not come to curse the darkness, but to light a candle.

But it wasn't just about talk; it was about action. We said we would work across the aisle, and I was ranked the fourth most bipartisan Member in Congress.

I said I would work with anyone to get things done, and President Trump signed two of my bills into law.

I promised to protect our beautiful shorelines in South Carolina, and we passed my bipartisan bill that did exactly that.

We showed that working together can manifest remarkable results, all of which was made possible by the dedication of my incredible staff and with the love and support of my family.

Sadly though, here in Washington, D.C., bipartisanship and civility seem to be the exception and not the rule. In my short tenure, I have been disappointed with a lot that I have encountered.

I have seen Members consistently put their party ahead of their own people; embracing conspiracy theories or arguments detached from reality while knowing better and, sometimes, admitting so privately.

I have seen Members mock the President behind his back and praise him to his face; loathe him in private and worship him on television.

I have seen them intentionally spread misinformation and lies, flirt with white supremacists, and pander to the most extreme voices in our society.

And it has been for one reason and one reason alone: self-preservation; people more interested in protecting themselves and their party than protecting our country; more interested in keeping their job than doing their job.

Such reckless and selfish behavior has created a system where most politicians can't lose and most Americans can't win. And when it is time to tackle the greatest challenges before us, our leaders cannot even agree on the problems, let alone the solutions.

Today's elected leaders bear a tremendous responsibility to be the custodians of our young and fragile democracy. And make no mistake, our democracy has been battered and bruised, but it is not yet broken. And